It is easier to build strong children than repair broken men.

-Frederick Douglass
HELLO FRIENDS,

Behind a baby’s bright eyes and heart-melting smile, we know there is something even more beautiful taking place. From the very beginning, we know a child’s brain is developing and expanding at an amazing rate. Making the most of those first years – that critical period of brain development – is at the heart of our work at the United Way Center for Excellence in Early Education (the Center).

Back in the 1990s United Way of Miami-Dade embarked on an ambitious journey to change the system of early education. We did not have to look much further than our state capital to know we faced an uphill battle. The simple fact that Florida’s Office of Early Learning was housed under the Agency for Workforce Innovation spoke volumes about the way lawmakers – and the public in general – viewed early care and education.

Today, more than 15 years later, we have indeed come a long way. The Center – then just a dream – is now in its seventh year. The Center serves as a world-class teaching and training initiative for educators, parents, community leaders and others. This report highlights our work, our programs and our partnerships.

Among our many points of pride in the past year are two letters and four numbers: HB 7165. Together they represent a subtle but significant shift in the way early education is perceived and funded in the state of Florida. We were honored to host Governor Rick Scott and other public officials at the Center for a ceremonial signing of House Bill 7165 - this new law restructures the state’s early learning system. It is a hard fought victory for child advocates, and represents tangible proof we are gaining momentum in our quest. And yet, we know we have a long way to go.

We will succeed when ALL children have access to high quality early learning experiences. Thank you for all you have done, and will continue to do, to ensure children have the foundation to thrive in school and in life.

Harve A. Mogul
President and CEO,
United Way of Miami-Dade
Our Approach

VISION
All children will have access to the highest quality early care and education so they can have the best possible start.

MISSION
Elevate the quality of early care and education in Miami-Dade and beyond. Our mission is supported by three guiding principles:

- EDUCATE
- DEMONSTRATE
- ADVOCATE
**EDUCATE**

The Center educates parents and early care professionals on how to become agents of change and improve early childhood education at home and in the classroom. By providing training and resources, created and delivered by leading experts in the field of early education, the Center addresses the educational and developmental needs of our most deserving citizens – our children. Beyond educating parents and early care professionals on best practices, the Center equips stakeholders with the knowledge and tools to understand and deliver high-quality early care and education.

**DEMONSTRATE**

The Center demonstrates how to improve the quality of services and programs available to young children by serving as a model for observation and implementation of best practices. Additionally, we model a variety of cost options for those interested in revamping or building centers of high-quality. All best practices modeled at the Center’s Demonstration School, Educare of Miami-Dade, are supported by research. The unique composition of the building allows for in-depth observation of those practices without interrupting the children’s learning process.

**ADVOCATE**

The best way to create a comprehensive and efficient early childhood system is to educate and mobilize the community to support and improve policies for young children. Effective, evidence-based early childhood policies, programs and services go a long way in supporting stronger families and communities. The Center empowers parents and educators to demand the highest quality care for all children, brings together leading child advocates, and works with business leaders and lawmakers to raise the standards of early childhood education and support sustainable and lasting change. The Center furthers the impact of its advocacy efforts by building strategic partnerships and a spirit of collaboration among those involved in early care and education.
85% of brain development occurs by age three, yet less than 4% of public investments in education and development occur in that period.

(Source: Early Learning Left Out: An Examination of Public Investments in Education and Development by Child Age, Voices for America’s Children and the Child and Family Policy Center (2004))

700: new neural connections are formed every second in the first few years of life. These are the connections that build brain architecture—the foundation upon which all learning, behavior, and health depend.


By age four, a child in a low-income home will have only HEARD TWO WORDS FOR EVERY SEVEN that a child in a higher-income family has heard.


Without a high-quality early childhood program opportunity, an at-risk child is:

- 25% more likely to drop out of school
- 40% more likely to become a teen parent
- 50% more likely to be placed in special education
- 60% more likely to never attend college

(Source: Center for American Progress; “Increasing the Effectiveness and Efficiency of Existing Public Investment in Early Public Investments in Early Childhood Education,” (2012))
Skill begets skill; motivation begets motivation. If a child is not motivated to learn and engage early on in life, the more likely it is that when the child becomes an adult, it will fail in social and economic life. The longer society waits to intervene in the life cycle of a disadvantaged child, the more costly it is to remediate disadvantage.

-Dr. James Heckman, Nobel Prize Winning Economist

Every dollar invested in high-quality early childhood education produces 7 to 10% annual return in better education, health, social and economic outcomes.

... in other words

Each dollar invested in a child from birth to age 3 can yield up to a $10 return on investment.

(Source: Heckman, J.J.; “Invest in early childhood development: Reduce deficits strengthen the economy,” (2013))
Designing, implementing and managing training initiatives for early learning administrators, educators, owners and families are key to elevating the quality of early learning programs.

**OUR TRAININGS**

In 2013, the Center provided:

- **502** training sessions for
- **4,145** early childhood professionals

**ELC COMMUNITY-WIDE TRAININGS**

Through funding from the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/ Monroe (ELC), the Center provides on-going professional development at no cost to early childhood educators and providers across Miami-Dade County. In 2013, for the first time, the Center offered trainings in Monroe County.

**PATHWAYS TO QUALITY**

United Way mentors administrators and teachers at United Way-funded early childhood centers to improve program quality.

- **80%** Accredited
- **20%** On the Path to Accreditation

Pathways to Quality has allowed me to focus on professional development in order to improve the quality of education at our center and reach our goals and objectives.

- Antonia Corrales, curriculum specialist, Centro Mater West
CONFERENCE PROFILE: This summer the Center teamed up with Professor Mileidis Gort and her colleagues from the University of Miami School of Education to host the Teaching in a Multilingual Context Institute. Thanks to funding from The Children’s Trust MAESTRO program, and United Way’s Pathways to Quality program, the day-long institute helped more than 100 early childhood professionals deepen their knowledge of best practices in language acquisition. Attendees learned about effective program structure, parent and community connections, and tools for appropriate instruction.

MAESTRO

Mentoring All Educators, Supporting Teachers, Raising Outcomes is an all-inclusive approach to improving literacy instruction through a dynamic combination of training and one-on-one coaching.

“MAESTRO provided me with strategies to enhance early literacy skills which I now use in the classroom with the children.”

-Carmen Duque de Estrada, preschool teacher, Catholic Charities, Centro Hispano Católico

SEMINARS & CONFERENCES

Each year, the Center hosts a range of seminars and conferences around key issues in early childhood development.

ECPAI

Early Childhood Program Administrators Institute

In 2013, ECPAI, the Center’s professional development program for early childhood administrators, expanded into underserved neighborhoods, including Liberty City.

*Class of 2013-2014 will graduate in 2014

MAESTRO

MAESTRO teachers receive 72 HOURS of literacy coaching

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The United Way Center for Excellence in Early Education Dolphin Digital Media Demonstation School, Educare of Miami-Dade is a model for observation and implementation of research-based best practices in early learning.

**best practices modeled**

**TEACHER-CHILD RATIO:**
- **INFANTS & TODDLERS:** 3 teachers to 8 children
- **PRESCHOOL:** 2 teachers to 17 children

**DEGREED TEACHERS:**
- 100% BACHELORS DEGREE OR HIGHER

**WELLNESS:**
Children and families take part in a comprehensive health and nutrition program. Families learn the basics of healthy eating and exercise through trainings supported by the Aetna Foundation.
- 100% OF CHILDREN SCREENED FOR HEARING AND VISION

**MIXED-INCOME MODEL:**
As a model of best practices, it is essential that the school’s student body represents the community’s economic and social diversity.

- 53% FULL PAY
- 47% SUBSIDIZED

**FAMILY ENGAGEMENT:**
Engaged and informed families form the solid foundation from which children can grow.
- 112 FAMILIES ATTENDED TRAININGS
Teachers and children use numerous technology tools such as Mp3 players, digital cameras, digital microscopes, and projectors in the classroom to enhance learning opportunities.

**TECHNOLOGY**

**SCIENTIFIC & MATHEMATICAL THINKING**

Students learn basic science and math skills while playing in their classroom garden, kitchen and art studio. For example, children measure, observe and track the growth of vegetables from their gardens.

**INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING**

 Teachers work with students to develop questions around the children’s interests. The use of research-based “thinking routines” cultivates critical thinking skills and lays the foundation for lifelong learning.

**EARLY LITERACY**

Language and communication development are part of nearly every activity at the Center. Children explore and play with books, sing nursery rhymes, recognize words, scribble, and celebrate the art of storytelling.

**SOCIAL EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

In the past year teachers at the Demonstration School were trained using MindUp™, an evidence-based curriculum that fosters social and emotional awareness.

**DUAL LANGUAGE**

Children are exposed to English and Spanish at school, while teachers work with parents to promote the child’s home language and support learning a second language.

To learn more about our recommended practices, scan here: unitedwaycfe.org
We mobilize lawmakers, community and business leaders, and others to support high-quality early education. An engaged and educated public brings muscle to our movement, and serves as the catalyst for positive changes in funding, policy and perception.

**FLORIDA HB 7165**
Signed into law in 2013; restructures the state’s early learning system

High-quality early learning is one of the smartest public investments available. It prepares our children to succeed in life and provides the greatest economic return for society. Increasing investments in early childhood education must be a priority for policymakers at all levels.

-Elizabeth Leight, committee chair, United Way Center for Excellence in Early Education

**32 FLORIDA UNITED WAYS JOINED FORCES TO ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.**

**United Way Consensus Legislative Agenda Priority Issues**
- Early Learning
- Access to Healthcare
- Financial Stability for Families

**ENGAGED VOLUNTEERS**

More than 200 volunteers read to low-performing preschool children every week.

**READINGPALS PROGRAM**

**CHAMPIONS FOR CHANGE**

22 members of United Way’s Women’s Leadership group traveled to Washington D.C. to advocate to make early learning a priority.
Since opening its doors in 2007, the Center has welcomed early childhood practitioners, advocates, policy makers and business leaders from around the world to observe our work and take lessons learned back to their own communities and countries.
2013: A Year of Growth

January
As part of our outreach to elevate early education, the Center received first proposals from nearly a dozen United Ways in Latin America for the United Way International Initiative “Play with a Purpose” signature project.

February
Staff at the Center received training on the MindUp Curriculum, a social and emotional program developed by the Hawn Foundation. Teachers later incorporated the curriculum into their classes.

March
Students at the Demonstration School learned about making soap and then opened a store to sell the soap. The children used profits from the soap store to buy items for children enrolled in the Center’s home-based program at the Lotus House.

April
Center staff presented at the Visible Thinking South Florida Conference and hosted a dinner reception for Dr. David Perkins and Dr. Shari Tishman from Harvard’s Project Zero, and all of the conference participants.

May
ECPAI participants presented on how to provide meaningful professional development to center administrators at the One Goal Summer Conference, a statewide early childhood conference.

June
United Way of Miami-Dade President and CEO, Harve Mogul along with Matt Gorson, United Way board member, and Jo Sumberg from our Women’s Leadership attended an Educare meeting with Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, Susie Buffett, J.B. Pritzker, and Kathleen Sebelius in Washington D.C.
July
Students enjoyed special summer programming at the Demonstration School, including innovative outdoor activities and creative art projects.

August
Two teachers who benefitted from early literacy training programs at the Center received awards at the National Head Start Association’s Scholarship & Awards Program. Betty Ford, now a preschool teacher at St. Alban’s Child Enrichment Center, was involved in United Way’s Project LEER (Literacy Enhancement for Early Readers) and Frances Lozada-Tirado Lozada-Tirado, a preschool teacher at Holy Redeemer is part of the MAESTRO program.

September
Libby Doggett, deputy assistant secretary for policy and early learning at the U.S Department of Education, Sylvia Acevedo, presidential commissioner at the White House Initiative for Educational Excellence for Hispanics, and Nancy Navarro, Montgomery County councilmember visited the Center as part of The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence National Summit on Hispanic Early Learning kick-off reception which was hosted at the Center.

October
As part of the national Read for the Record event, more than 100 United Way Young Leaders read Otis by Loren Long to nearly 1,100 students in 67 early childhood classrooms.

November
Partnered with Miami-Dade County Public School, Coral Way Elementary to create a vegetable and herb garden. This was made possible thanks to a $2,000 Whole Kids Foundation grant.

December
Partnered with the Center for Advancement of Jewish Education (CAJE) to create the Early Childhood Leadership Institute. The Center will provide customized professional development to leaders in CAJE affiliated centers starting in January, 2014.
Funding Partners

$5 MILLION +
The Batchelor Foundation
Geraldine and Bennett LeBow

$1 MILLION - $4,999,999
Edmund N. Ansin
The Buffett Early Childhood Fund
The Children’s Trust
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United Way of Miami-Dade Young Leaders
Wells Fargo
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$1,000 – $9,999
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In the past seven years, the United Way Center for Excellence in Early Education has had the privilege of working alongside key partners who share in this vision and embody the spirit of collaboration. Together, we continue to elevate the quality of early care and education in Miami-Dade and beyond.
“There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children.”

-Nelson Mandela